IMPACTS ON NATO EXPANSION: THE PARTNERSHIP FOR PEACE PROGRAM AND THE KOSOVO WAR

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ABSTRACT

Considerable academic debate has arisen about the causes of the deteriorating U.S.-Russia relationship. Despite the early promise for improved relations after the Soviet Union's collapse, Washington and Moscow have struggled to move forward with a productive relationship. A constructive relationship has failed to materialize for numerous reasons, but one of the most prominent legacy issues for today's adversarial relationship is the original decision to expand NATO in the 1990s and the failure to integrate Russia into the post-Cold War European security architecture. This research paper is attempting to answer how and why Russia failed to become integrated into NATO during the debates surrounding NATO expansion in the 1990s. This paper hypothesizes that Russia's discontentment with the Partnership for Peace (PFP) and NATO's Kosovo campaign served as "rupture points" in the relationship that ultimately precluded them from joining. By utilizing a historical methods approach, leveraging recently declassified primary source documents, memoirs, diaries and secondary sources, this paper constructs a broader narrative about the arguments surrounding PFP and NATO involvement in the Balkans, in order to assess the impacts of the Partnership for Peace Program and the Kosovo war on Russia's failure to join NATO. The paper finds split causality, with evidence supporting the Kosovo hypothesis, but not the PFP.

Advisors and reviewers: Sarah Clark, Donald Jensen, Debra Cagan

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S.-Soviet Union Cold War standoff shaped and defined world affairs for the better part of 45 years and effectively split the European continent into two distinct spheres of influence. Despite the stand-off there was relative stability which was backstopped by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) serving as a guarantor of the peace. However, with the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the dismemberment of the Warsaw Pact, a new period of uncertainty emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s. At the same time, the upheaval also represented opportunity and the potential to reorder Europe's political and security architectures.

Given NATO's primacy as a political and military alliance, questions on both sides of the Atlantic naturally emerged about the alliance's future. NATO was created to provide collective security against the Soviet Union, but with the Soviet Union's collapse, does NATO still have a strategic role to play? Should NATO still ensure Europe's security or should the alliance dissolve entirely or should it be reimagined for a new role? Would it be possible for a newly formed Russia to be integrated? These questions, and others, would be hotly debated in the U.S. and European capitals, and the answers would prove historically consequential. Of the myriad issues U.S. and European leaders contended with in the 1990s, perhaps no issue was more consequential than the decision to enlarge NATO, which saw the accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to the alliance in 1999.

Despite the enormity of NATO's enlargement, its political and security legacy remains contested, with academics, historians and policy makers reaching consensus on some issues, and diverging on others. With the passage of time, volumes of books, journal articles, and memoirs have been written, each seeking to understand the array of issues surrounding NATO

enlargement, arguing that certain causal factors hold the key for understanding what drove expansion.

This paper seeks to examine the interplay between the different arguments and to identify the key moments during the NATO enlargement debates that ultimately led to the alliance's expansion. More specifically, this paper will examin the history of NATO enlargement with special emphasis on discerning the critical pivot points that served to rupture U.S.-Russia relations and precluded Russia from joining NATO. To that end, this paper's central question is how and why did Russia fail to become integrated into NATO during the debates surrounding NATO expansion in the 1990s? Given the current contentious state of U.S.-Russian relations, and the existing animosity between Russia and NATO, it is hard to imagine that the prospect of Russia joining NATO was ever seriously considered or a possibility. But it was. Based on the evidence, this author beleives there was a window of opportunity for closer integration and greater cooperation, and that both Russia and the U.S. held out hope that one day Russia would even join NATO.[1] But, the author is also mindful that despite both public and private comments about Russia's potential to join the alliance, one must also consider the possibility that the prospect was never taken seriously by either side. That is, while on the surface, both sides may have held out hope for Russia joining NATO, we must consider the possibility that membership

[1] Most notable evidence of Russia voicing potential to join NATO include Thomas L. Friedman, "Soviet Disarray: Yeltsin Says Russia Seeks to Join NATO," *The New York Times*, December 21, 1991, https://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/21/world/soviet-disarray-yeltsin-says-russia-seeks-to-join-nato.html; Boris Yeltsin to Bill Clinton, "Yeltsin Letter on NATO Expansion," 15 September 1993, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C. See page 3 https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390818-Document-04-Retranslation-of-Yeltsin-letter-on#_edn13; Andrei Kozyrev, "The New Russia and the Atlantic Alliance," *NATO Review* 41, no.1 (1993): 3–6. For U.S. position on Russia joining NATO see: Lin Davis Memo to Secretary of State Christopher, "Strategy for NATO's Expansion and Transformation," 7 September 1993, National Security Archives, Washington, D.C. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390816-Document-02-Strategy-for-NATO-s-Expansion-and; See also Anthony Lake Memo to President Clinton pg 71-76, National Security Council and NSC Records Management System, "Declassified Documents Concerning NATO Expansion ," 13 October 1994, Clinton Digital Library, https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/57563.

was held out as a potential only at a theoretical level, particularly when one could interpret the actions by either side throughout the enlargement process as undermining the likelihood of Russian membership. However, for the purposes of this paper, this author accepts the evidence in the previous note that point to the potential for Russia joining the alliance as the basis for this paper even if only considered at a theoretical level as President Yeltsin said.[2] Consequently, it is worth examining what precluded Russia from joining NATO after the Cold War, as the decisions that were undertaken in the 1990s fundamentally reordered the European security landscape, altered U.S., NATO, and Russian relations, and inform much of today's animosities.

Identifying an appropriate interpretive framework in which to understand NATO enlargement poses a unique challenge because no one particular explanation is satisfying enough on its own because NATO enlargement must be thought of in terms of interrelated causal factors. In examining the historical record, and having reviewed the literature, historians do organize their work along several broader categories of inquiry: bureaucratic politics and the role of key, influential policy advisors within the Clinton administration; domestic politics; Russian perspectives; the role of international crisis, specifically in the Balkans; and lastly, the role of George H.W. Bush's administration in laying the groundwork for NATO expansion during the course of negotiations to reunify Germany and their admittance in to NATO.

This paper will proceed as follows: first, a thorough historiography will be conducted using the above categories as an interpretive framework for understanding NATO enlargement, identifying the areas of consensus and disagreement, and the pivot-points in expansion that may be at the root of Russia's failure to join NATO. Second, using a historical-methods approach, examining primary and secondary sources, memoirs and other first-hand accounts, the paper will

[2] Boris Yeltsin to Bill Clinton, "Yeltsin Letter on NATO Expansion," 3.

paint a picture of the various debates, and the decision-making process surrounding enlargement within the Clinton administration. Similar analysis will be done from a Russian perspective with particular attention being paid to how the prospects of NATO expansion were being received in Russia as well as opposition to NATO involvement in the Balkans. Lastly, this paper will weave together the various data points, discuss its implications and draw conclusions about Russia's failure to join NATO.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Institutional and Bureaucratic Politics

A sizable body of research has emerged focusing on the policy-making process within President Clinton's national security and foreign policy apparatus. Notably, there is broad consensus among scholars and historians about the importance of internal bureaucratic dynamics, arguing that the source of NATO expansion was the result of a small group of influential advisors who outmaneuvered the bureaucratic opposition and pushed expansion forward.[3]

The most prominent scholarship advancing this line of argument has been pioneered by James Goldgeier and Mary Sarotte. Goldgeier was the first to provide a detailed accounting of the debates as they happened amongst key players within the interagency, providing us with a

[3] By no means exhaustive, but key research includes: James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but when: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 218.; James M. Goldgeier, "NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision," *Washington Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1998), 85.; Kimberly Marten, "Reconsidering NATO Expansion: A Counterfactual Analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990s," *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 2, (November 1, 2017): 135-161.; James Goldgeier and Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Evaluating NATO Enlargement: Scholarly Debates, Policy Implications, and Roads Not Taken," *International Politics* 57, no. 3 (2020), 291.; Kimberly Marten, "NATO Enlargement: Evaluating its Consequences in Russia," *International Politics* 57, no. 3 (2020), 401.; Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade itself for a New Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 372.; Mary Sarotte, "How to Enlarge NATO: The Debate Inside the Clinton Administration, 1993–95," *International Security* 44, no. 1 (2019), 7.; Gerald B. H. Solomon and Center for Strategic and International Studies, *The NATO Enlargement Debate, 1990-1997: Blessings of Liberty*, Vol. 174 (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), 189.

thorough timeline of key events. Notably, Goldgeier wrote contemporaneously to NATO enlargement, publishing his initial article in 1998, followed by a book in 1999 which provides a unique understanding of the events as they were happening.[4] However, Sarotte has been aided by the passage of time, writing ten years later and able to draw upon recently declassified material, newly released correspondence and other previously unavailable primary source documents.[5]

Goldgeier and Sarotte advance our understanding about NATO enlargement by framing the debate along a continuum of actions. While there is widespread agreement amongst the scholars on the broad contours of the administration's deliberations, and who the key players were, they each identify and emphasize different pivot points worth considering separately. For example, in Goldgeier's analysis, he argues that the decision to enlarge NATO was not a single decision, but rather a series of decisions and policy pronouncements that evolved during three key phases between 1993 and 1994.[6] Sarotte uses a similar framing device for her analyses and constructs her argument in terms of "rachets" that focus on "three decision making junctures."[7] Both authors cover similar ground and recount the same stories in each of their second and third phases and ratchets respectively, providing the reader with a holistic understanding of the time period.

In Goldgeier's first phase, he focuses his analysis on the bureaucratic debates that pitted supporters on the National Security Council (NSC) and a small coterie at Department of State (DOS), against opponents at the Department of Defense (DOD) and State, and the emergence of the Partnership for Peace program (PFP) ahead of the 1994 NATO summit in Brussels. Conversely, Sarotte identifies her first "rachet" as pre-dating the Clinton administration and

[4] Goldgeier, *Not Whether but when: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO*, 85.
[5] Sarotte, "How to Enlarge NATO: The Debate Inside the Clinton Administration, 1993–95," 7.
[6] Goldgeier, "NATO Expansion: The Anatomy of a Decision," 86.
[7] Sarotte, "How to Enlarge NATO", 10.

demonstrates that the George H.W. Bush administration's efforts in ensuring NATO would remain the most viable alliance in Europe proved critical in setting the foundation for Clinton to expand NATO.[8] Stephen Flanagan, writing as the former Associate Director of the U.S. State Department's Policy Planning Staff 1989-1995, supports Sarotte's arguments and makes a valuable contribution to our understanding about the key role Bush played as well.[9]

Importantly, both scholars' analysis advance our understanding of the formulation of the Partnership for Peace (PFP) program and how it was adopted early on as a viable alternative to NATO enlargement, but then eventually jettisoned in favor of a more rapid process of expansion. These debates are critical to understand because it was the abandonment of the PFP that created one of the earliest fissures in U.S.-Russia relations that would preclude Russia from joining NATO.

While Goldgeier and Sarotte's analysis are seminal, other scholars such as David Kupchan, Kimberly Marten and Ronald Asmus share in the assessment that it was a core group of advisors that "deftly outmaneuvered" the opposition, demonstrating how PFP's early support and momentum as the preferred policy choice was overcome.[10] With pro-NATO expansion supporters having effectively sidelined the PFP program, the one viable alternative to NATO was effectively killed. As later sections of this paper will demonstrate, this turn of events would prove costly in achieving any larger Russian integration with NATO.

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[8] Sarotte, "How to Enlarge NATO", 11-12.; Mary Elise Sarotte. "Perpetuating US Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to "bribe the Soviets Out" and Move NATO In." *International Security* 35, no. 1 (2010): 110.

[9] Stephen J. Flanagan, "NATO From Liaison to Enlargement: A Perspective from the State Department and the National Security Council 1990–1999," in *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War,* ed. Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr, (Washington, D.C.: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2019), 93-116.

[10] Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade itself for a New Era*, 372; Marten, "NATO Enlargement: Evaluating its Consequences in Russia," , 401; Charles A. Kupchan, "The Origins and Future of NATO Enlargement," *Contemporary Security Policy* 21, no. 2 (2000), 127-148.

Russian Perspectives

Status & Russian Identity

To understand Russian opposition to NATO enlargement we need to comprehend the importance and centrality of Russian identity in the formulation of their foreign policy more broadly. The most interesting scholarship examining the role of Russian identity is centered around the idea of status in international politics and their "great power standing," especially in relation to the West.[11] While notions of Russian exceptionalism has been historically important to Russia's sense of self, the end of the Cold War and the ensuing economic and political turmoil challenged Russia's sense of greatness. Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, using social identity theory to evaluate Russia's behavior after the Cold War argue that Russia's "unsettled identity" has "led to an obsession with international status and great power standing," always seeking to be seen as equal to the U.S.[12] Consequently, as Larson and Shevchenko demonstrate, Russia felt marginalized during the NATO enlargement debates, especially since they were largely dependent on the West's financial aid.[13]

Larson and Shevchenko are not alone in their assessment. For example, scholarship by Borawski,[14] Hall,[15] Sushentsov and Wohlforth,[16] and Kuzio[17] demonstrate an evolution of Russian foreign policy in which they sought greater parity and consultation with the U.S. after the Cold War. As these scholars point out, Russian foreign policy became more assertive in the

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[11] Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 34, no. 4 (2010), 63.
[12] Larson and Shevchenko, "Status Seekers", 79.
[13] Ibid., 80.
[14] John Borawski. "If Not NATO Enlargement: What does Russia Want?" *European Security* 5, no. 3 (1996), 381-395.
[15] Gregory Hall. "NATO and Russia, Russians and NATO: A Turning Point in Post-Cold War East-West Relations?" *World Affairs* 162, no. 1 (1999), 22.
[16] Sushentsov, A.A., Wohlforth, W.C., "The Tragedy of US–Russian Relations: NATO Centrality and the Revisionists' Spiral," 427–450
[17] Taras Kuzio. "NATO Enlargement: The View from the East." *European Security* 6, no. 1 (1997a): 48-62

1992-1993 timeframe as they sought to reclaim its great power status and challenge the West's initiative to expand NATO and the alliance's involvement abroad, specifically in the former Yugoslavia.

Notably, Russian identity did not only result in Russian resistance, but paradoxically, it also animated their desire for greater cooperation and consultation. Indeed, as Hall points out, Russian government and foreign policy officials in 1993 stressed the importance of "fostering cooperation with the West and Western institutions while maintaining its great power status."[18] The notion of seeking cooperation is important because, as Sushentsov and Wohlforth point out, it reflects Russia's "long-standing preference [for] multipolarity" and their "core preference for great-power parity in setting the global agenda."[19] What this line of scholarship argues is that much of Russia's animosity towards NATO enlargement stems from what Russia perceives to be the U.S. and the West's disregard for their identity as a great power and their refusal to see and deal with them as equals.

Elite and Domestic Opinion

Building on the preceding section, scholarship looking at Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement has also examined the role of government and military officials' opinions, rooted in their larger views of Russian identity, and how their views shaped official government positions.

The most prominent line of analysis in this area has been conducted by William Zimmerman who has conducted qualitative and quantitative survey analysis to assess Russian's

[18] Hall, "NATO and Russia," 23.
[19] Sushentsov and Wohlforth, "NATO Centrality," 440.

perspectives about NATO enlargement from both the viewpoints of Russian elites (government officials, military officers) and regular Russians.[20]

For Zimmerman, NATO expansion took on far greater importance for Russian elites than the general public and was an issue for elites for far longer.[21] Zimmerman argues that understanding attitudinal shifts, especially among the elites, is worth examining because they "coincide[d] with official views" and demonstrate the extent to which they affected Russian-NATO policy.[22] Russian scholar and academic, Andrei Zagorski, while not conducting original survey research like Zimmerman, nevertheless makes an important, but brief, contribution with his analysis, demonstrating how opinions shifted in parliament and the rest of the government towards opposition as NATO expansion accelerated.

Importantly, other scholars like Kimberly Marten,[23] Gregory Hall,[24] Taras Kuzio,[25] and Alexander Sergounin[26] extend Zimmerman's findings, arguing that Russian domestic politics and nationalism exacerbated Russian opposition to NATO expansion as the views of the government elite gained prominence and effected the decisions of the Yeltsin government, precluding him from taking a more conciliatory approach towards NATO or accepting a diminished role for Russia in Europe. Notably, in Kuzio's analysis of Russian elite's attitudes, he demonstrates that Russian hostility to NATO stems from the "legacy of Soviet influence which

[20] William Zimmerman. "NATO Expansion Past and Future: A Closer Look," in *The Russian People and Foreign Policy*, 187-215: Princeton University Press, 2002.; William Zimmerman. "Survey Research and Russian Perspectives on NATO Expansion." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 17, no. 3 (May 15, 2013): 235-261.
[21] Zimmerman, "Survey Research and Russian Perspectives," 239.
[22] Ibid., 190.
[23] Kimberly Marten. "NATO Enlargement: Evaluating its Consequences in Russia." *International Politics* 57, no. 3 (2020).
[24] Hall, Gregory O. "NATO and Russia, Russians and NATO: A Turning Point in Post-Cold War East-West Relations?" *World Affairs* 162, no. 1 (1999): 22.
[25] Kuzio, Taras. "Nato Enlargement: The View from the East." *European Security* 6, no. 1 (1997b): 48-62.
[26] Sergounin, Alexander A. "Russian Domestic Debate on NATO Enlargement: From Phobia to Damage Limitation." *European Security,* 6, no. 4 (1997): 55-71.

still permeates its power ministries and diplomatic communities."[27] Furthermore, Moscow's hostility towards the alliance is rooted in its "inheritance" of former "Soviet diplomatic personnel, Moscow-based think tanks, Soviet general staff, ruling bodies of the KGB and former Soviet central media" all of which combined to sow the seeds of distrust about NATO and exerted pressure on the government to adopt a more adversarial stance towards enlargement.[28]

The preceding body of literature demonstrates that Russian opposition is rooted at a more fundamental level of Russian identity, which in turn informed the views of the Russian elite. Regardless of the details of NATO expansion, the arguments made by the West to allay any Russian fears likely could not have been overcome because NATO expansion was anathema to Russia's sense of self, and with widespread opposition throughout the Russian bureaucracy, any idea of joining NATO was likely not a realistic option given the underlying dynamics of identity, nationalism and elite viewpoints.

Impact of International Crisis

Any assessment of NATO expansion must be understood within the context of a number of international crisis, especially the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. At the end of the Cold War, the descent in to ethnic and sectarian violence in the Balkans, particularly in Bosnia, and then later, Kosovo, proved central to the Clinton administration's NATO expansion calculations. As will be shown, it was also a significant concern for Russia and source of tension in the U.S.-Russia-NATO relationship.

A variety of secondary sources and scholarly articles that draw upon previously classified material and correspondence and interviews with government officials; memoirs from key Clinton administration advisors; and other writing from U.S. and Russian government personnel

[27] Kuzio, NATO Enlargement: The View from the East, 53.
[28] Ibid.

provide us with a unique understanding of how the Balkans' deteriorating situation informed the Clinton administration's decision making on NATO expansion and Russia's reaction.[29]

In attempting to understand the Balkan crisis and its correlation to the NATO expansion debates, some scholars have focused on the broader European security environment and Europe's security institutions in which the Balkans were collapsing. For example, William Hill's larger level analysis enables him to identify a pivotal turning point in the alliance's purpose and the theoretical basis for its existence: the end of the Cold War and the instability produced from Yugoslavia's collapse which forced NATO to transition from a "collective defense organization to a collective security organization."[30]

Hill's identification of this pivot point is notable because it reinforces the views expressed in other literature about the role of the Balkans crisis on NATO enlargement. For instance, in Ronald Asmus' excellent memoir, he recounts Ambassador Madeline Albright's views that the Baltic issue was a "litmus test of NATO enlargement" and needed to be viewed as part of a larger European "integrationist strategy."[31] Moreover, a compendium of scholarship published in 2019 by senior officials in the U.S. government at the time reinforces the centrality

[29] Not exhaustive, but notable journal articles, books, and memoirs providing important insights: Timothy A. Sale, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019.; Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.-Russian Relations In the Twenty-First Century.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014.; Strobe Talbot, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy.* New York: Random House, 2002.; James Goldgeier and Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shifrinson, "Evaluating NATO Enlargement: Scholarly Debates, Policy Implications, and Roads Not Taken." *International Politics* 57, no. 3 (2020): 291; Gerald B. H. Solomon and Center for Strategic and International Studies. *The NATO Enlargement Debate, 1990-1997: Blessings of Liberty. The Washington Papers. Vol. 174. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998.;* Kimberly Marten, "NATO Enlargement: Evaluating its Consequences in Russia." *International Politics,* 57, no. 3 (2020).; Itzkowitz Shifrinson, Joshua R. "Deal Or no Deal? the End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion." *International Security* 40, no. 4 (2016); Ronald J. Bee. "Boarding the NATO Train: Enlargement and National Interests." *Contemporary Security Policy* 21, no. 2 (2000a): 149-169.; John Borawski, "If Not NATO Enlargement: What does Russia Want?" *European Security* 5, no. 3 (1996a): 381-395.

[30] William H. Hill, *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions since 1989*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.

[31] Ronald D. Asmus, *Opening NATO's Door: How the Alliance Remade itself for a New Era*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

of the Balkans crisis to NATO expansion.[32] Moreover, first person accounts from Russian officials and other NATO-allied countries from the same publication share a similar view as their American counterparts, detailing how important the unfolding crisis was within their respective governments and the role it played in exacerbating tensions with Russia.[33]

While much of the scholarship focuses on the role of the Balkans crises during the 1990s broadly, it should be noted that a number of scholars ascribe particular importance to events in Kosovo specifically, identifying the Kosovo war as perhaps the greatest threat to NATO-Russia relations.[34] As the previously noted scholars argue, Russia became incensed over NATO airstrikes in Kosovo because they were unilateral, targeted Russia's "Slavic kinsman," lacked UNSC approval, and again ignored Russian interests on a major security issue in Europe.[35] As Baker, Marten, Smith and Hill show, the U.S.' end-around of the UNSC cut deep and violated Russia's sense of identity as a great power, causing major reputational damage to NATO inside Russia.

Historiography Conclusion

What this historiography has shown is the diversity in methods in which scholars and historians have approached the examination of NATO expansion. Moreover, the methodological variance demonstrates the complexity of the issue, and properly understanding NATO enlargement entails weaving together the various schools of thought to provide a holistic view of

[32] Daniel S. Hamilton, Kristina Spohr. *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War*. Washington, D.C.: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2019.
[33] Ibid., In particular, see first-person accounts by Andrei Kozyrev, Andrei Zagorski and *Part V: The Russian Conundrum and the Balkan Backdrop.*
[34] Martin A Smith. "A Bumpy Road to an Unknown Destination? NATO-Russia Relations, 1991–2002." *European Security* 11, no. 4 (2002): 59-77.; James A. Baker. "Russia in NATO?" *Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2001): 95.; Kimberly Marten. "NATO Enlargement: Evaluating its Consequences in Russia." *International Politics* 57, no. 3 (2020).; William H. Hill *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions since 1989*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press Series. New York: Columbia University Press, 2018.
[35] Baker, "Russia in NATO?"

enlargement. However, while the existing literature is notable for how vast it is, it is equally notable for its absences. The broad consensus that exists points to a lack of literature that probes this very consensus, challenging the major historical works, their narratives, and assumptions. That is, there is no scholarship that endeavors to refute the major schools of thought discussed above or that attempts to prevent a counter-narrative to them.

For example, while those scholars within the Institutional and Bureaucratic school provide a unique perspective of the Clinton administration's internal deliberations, they both rely on similar sourcing and narratives and build upon one another's works. While scholarly agreement can point to a true consensus, what is lacking is scholarship that presents countervailing viewpoints that do not rely on the same views of the same scholars, and the views of the same political players. Scholarship that seeks to draw upon other first-hand accounts from others within the national security bureaucracy may challenge the prevailing notion that it was a small group of highly influential advisors that outmaneuvered the rest of the bureaucracy.

Additionally, readers assessing scholarship that focuses on elite and domestic opinion should keep in mind the differences between Western standards of feeling free to voice one's true opinion versus those in Russia, particularly in the 1990s. That is, while the methodologies employed in the scholarship may be rigorous, one must also keep in mind that Russian elite opinions may be compelled to maintain the "party line" and thus are not a true representation of their views, which may call in to question the validity and usefulness of such data.

Lastly, what is still lacking is an attempt to isolate one or more of the variables of enlargement and test it against the historical record in order to identify whether those variables could be determined to be a root-cause for Russia's failure to join NATO. The remainder of this paper attempts to do just that.

Hypothesis and Methods

This research paper is attempting to answer how and why Russia failed to become integrated into NATO during the debates surrounding NATO expansion in the 1990s. To this end, this paper hypothesizes that Russia's discontentment with the PFP and NATO's Kosovo campaign served as "rupture points" in the relationship that ultimately precluded them from joining.

To answer this question, this paper will utilize a historical methods approach. While NATO enlargement is a broad topic spanning many years, this paper will focus on two discreet historical moments of the larger NATO enlargement debate: The Partnership for Peace Program and the Kosovo war. By utilizing recently declassified primary source documents, this paper will construct a broader narrative about the arguments surrounding PFP and NATO involvement in the Balkans. Additionally, analysis of primary source documents will be supplemented by assessing secondary sources, memoirs, diaries and recently published, firsthand recollections from U.S. and Russian government officials to construct a more comprehensive picture.

There are a number of limitations with this approach that must be acknowledged. The first limitation is that of language. The author does not speak Russia which constrains their ability to access Russian primary documents and scholarly articles written from the Russian perspective. While there is a notable body of scholarship in English providing a Russian perspective, it is nevertheless limiting. Similarly, while declassified U.S. documents are useful in so far as they record what Russian officials said, the language barrier prevents one from reading Russia's views of events. Even if language were not a limitation, Russia has not declassified or made accessible as many documents as the U.S. so there is an inevitable degree of one-sidedness which could alter the study.

Lastly, this study was unable to include interviews with policy makers directly involved in the NATO expansion debates. While the study draws upon the available memoirs and diaries of the key architects, what is missing are the views and experiences of the policy makers within the bureaucracy who were directly charged with drafting and implementing the policies. Such views could present valuable counterpoints to the prevailing published views and provide additional data-points to measure the hypothesis against and therefore impact the study's conclusions.

Data

Partnership for Peace (PFP)

The deteriorating situation in Bosnia, combined with Clinton's personal desire for America to maintain a leadership role in Europe's political and security affairs put NATO's future at the top of President Clinton's foreign policy agenda early in his first year in office. With Clinton receptive to the idea of enlarging NATO – in large part due to the prodding by central and eastern European states – his administration undertook an interagency review of NATO and began developing the President's agenda in preparation for his attendance at the January 1994 NATO summit. The most prominent outcome of this interagency review process was the formulation of the Partnership for Peace Program which Clinton unveiled at the summit in Brussels.

The unsettled security environment in Europe led the administration to develop the PFP as a mechanism to anchor and integrate newly independent European states within Western institutions. PFP was intended to provide an avenue in which non-NATO European countries could become operationally associated with NATO, increase military ties, and it would be open

to all nonaligned nations, including Russia and Ukraine.[36] Importantly, the U.S. viewed PFP as the viable long-term security solution Europe had been seeking since the end of the Cold War, and a stepping-stone to eventual NATO membership.[37]

NATO formally announced the PFP program at the 1994 NATO summit alongside Clinton's most forceful public remarks about expanding NATO and articulating the program's true purpose: "...[PFP] will advance a process of evolution for NATO's formal enlargement. It looks to the day when NATO will take on new members who assume the Alliance's full responsibilities."[38] Speaking in Prague following the summit, Clinton pushed the enlargement agenda forward: "While the Partnership is not NATO membership, neither is it a permanent holding room. It changes the entire NATO dialog so that now the question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members but when and how."[39] With Clinton firmly on the record and committed to expanding NATO, the issue of pacing, timing, and sequencing took on increased importance, splitting the administration into a pro-expansion faction that supported full NATO membership immediately versus those lobbying for a gradual, phased approach to expansion, working through the PFP.

The pro-expansion camp led by National Security Advisor Anthony Lake and other senior officials at the Department of State and the National Security Council were responsible for advocating a more aggressive expansion policy and for turning the President's rhetoric at the NATO summit into reality. The earliest evidence we have of the Administration's intentions is a

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[36] William H. Hill, *No Place for Russia: European Security Institutions since 1989* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).
[37] Robert Hunter, "Toward NATO Enlargement: The Role of USNATO," in *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War,* ed. Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr, (Washington, D.C.: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2019), 307.
[38] Remarks to Multinational Audience of Future Leaders of Europe, President Bill Clinton, Brussels, Belgium, January 9, 1994, at: https://usa.usembassy.de/ etexts/ga6-940109.htm.
[39] The President's News Conference With Visegrad Leaders in Prague January 12, 1994, at: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/WCPD-1994-01- 17/pdf / WCPD-1994 - 01-17-Pg41.pdf.

September 1993 memo from Lin Davis, under-secretary for arms control and international security affairs, to Secretary of State Warren Christopher.[40] The memo envisioned a new role for NATO in Europe, advocated rapidly expanding NATO, outlined the criteria for joining, and included a timetable for various country's admittance, to include Russia and Ukraine.[41] While Lake, and others, viewed NATO expansion as central to the administration's larger goal of expanding democracy, others in the administration, including State's regional bureaus, were opposed to a fast-track approach on the grounds that it would up-end U.S.-Russia relations and sour other policy priorities, favoring a more gradualist approach to expansion that would slowly bring Russia along in the process.

Meanwhile, while State was split into factions, the Department of Defense was universally opposed to a rapid expansion as well. Secretary of Defense William Perry and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shalikashvili, wanted to emphasize the PFP and believed expansion should be "sequential," and "countries would participate in PFP for a number of years" at which point the alliance would discuss expanding.[42]

It should be noted that as a policy matter, expanding NATO was broadly supported. However, the tension between the pro-expansion camp and the "gradualists" was rooted in the issue of timing and sequencing, and whether new NATO members would be immediately granted full membership, to include article 5 protections (an attack on one country is considered an attack on the whole alliance). This distinction will become an important tension point in the

[40] Lin Davis Memo to Secretary of State Christopher, "Strategy for NATO's Expansion and Transformation," 7 September 1993, National Security Archives, Washington, D.C. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390816-Document-02-Strategy-for-NATO-s-Expansion-and
[41] Ibid
[42] Ibid., 93.

U.S-Russia relationship as primary source documents reveal Russian skepticism about PFP and the pacing of enlargement.

Russia's Perspective: NATO Enlargement & PFP

Well before the possibility of NATO enlargement broke in to the public debate and Russian suspicions about NATO grew deeper, the future of Russian relations towards NATO had been broached as early as December 1991 when President Yeltsin sent a letter to NATO countries stating that "we are raising the question of Russia's admission to NATO, although we are prepared to regard this as a long-term political goal."[43] Concurrently, while Russia was beginning to position itself vis a vis NATO in late 1991, in the U.S., the Bush administration was laying the groundwork for NATO enlargement and the framework and plans for PFP "[were] well developed by the end of 1992."[44] Thus, both countries in the early 1990s were each laying the foundation for their respective positions, attempting to maneuver their countries on to favorable policy grounds. As the Clinton administration picked up where Bush left off and more fully developed the PFP program, 1993 would prove pivotal in Russia's understanding of U.S. intentions about NATO enlargement broadly, and PFP specifically.

President Yeltsin was aware that Clinton was reviewing NATO's status and considering the alliance's future in 1993, and decided to send a letter that September as a way to register his country's concerns about the possibility of NATO expanding and in hopes of influencing the President's thinking.[45] The letter lays out his opposition to NATO expansion expressing

[43] Kimberly Marten, "Reconsidering NATO Expansion: A Counterfactual Analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990s," *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 2, (November 1, 2017): 141.
[44] Flanagan, "NATO From Liaison to Enlargement," 93. For more detail on how Bush laid the foundation for NATO enlargement see Mary Elise Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to "bribe the Soviets Out" and Move NATO In," *International Security* 35, no. 1 (2010): 110.
[45] Boris Yeltsin to Bill Clinton, "Yeltsin Letter on NATO Expansion," 15 September 1993, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390818-Document-04-Retranslation-of-Yeltsin-letter-on#_edn13

concerns with Clinton's discussions about "the scenario of quantitative expansion" by adding "East European countries."[46] The letter also makes clear Russia's desire to integrate with European security architectures and that there are other options for the U.S. and Russia to cooperate and collectively address the continent's security issues.

A month later in October, Secretary Christopher traveled to Moscow to first meet with Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev, and then President Yeltsin in order to preview the PFP and the following year's NATO summit agenda. In his meeting with Kozyrev, Christopher acknowledged Russia's concerns about NATO expanding and assured him that there would be "no immediate provision for new memberships," (meaning NATO) and that the PFP would be open to all countries.[47] However, the memo does reflect the possibility of "eventual [NATO] membership" based on a country's performance in PFP.[48] To clarify whether the administration sought to immediately expand NATO, Kozyrev asks more "pointedly whether there would not be two or three new members now?", but Christopher assures him "no," and that the U.S. was instead "emphasizing the [PFP]."[49]

Later that day in his meeting with Yeltsin, Christopher relayed that as a result of his September letter, it was the U.S.' view that "there could be no recommendation to ignore or exclude Russia from full participation in the future security of Europe" and that the PFP would not exclude anyone nor "push anyone ahead of the others."[50] At this point, the memo notes that Yeltsin seeks clarification as to whether central and Eastern European and newly independent

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[46] Ibid
[47] Secretary Christopher's Meeting with Foreign Minister Kozyrev: NATO, Elections, Regional Issues. 25 October 1993, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390821-Document-07-Secretary-Christopher-s-meeting-with
[48] Ibid., 3.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Secretary Christopher's meeting with President Yeltsin, Moscow. 22 October 1993, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C., 9. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390822-Document-08-Secretary-Christopher-s-meeting-with

states would be on "equal footing and there would be partnership and not membership?" Christopher replies "yes, that is the case, there would not even be an associate status."[51] At this reassurance, Yeltsin is ecstatic, claiming the plan "dissipates" all of Russia's "tension[s] regarding East European states and their aspirations with respect to NATO," further noting that under the PFP, everyone will be assured "equal participation on the basis of partnership."[52] However, the record indicates that after Yeltsin's enthusiasm, Christopher added that "in due course [we will] be looking at the question of [NATO] membership as a longer term eventuality."[53]

This crucial caveat may have gone unnoticed, or as Christopher and Strobe Talbot recount in their memoirs, Yeltsin only heard what he wanted to, namely that PFP was the NATO alternative instead of a pathway, and that Russia would be included in the European security system in the future. In Christopher's recounting of the meeting, Yeltsin was "emanating heavy alcohol fumes" and he thought he was drunk.[54] Talbot supports this observation, recounting Yeltsin delivering a "long, barely coherent boast" which precluded Yeltsin from understanding the U.S.' true message: "PFP today, enlargement tomorrow."[55] Foreign Minister Kozyrev, in recalling this meeting in 2019, seems to have comprehended the U.S.' true intention at the time, acknowledging after the meeting that "the new policy was not *instead* of but rather a pathway *to* enlargement." All these years later, Kozyrev remains confused as to why Christopher and Talbot did not finish their presentation without "clarifying the issue" for Yeltsin himself. Kozyrev recalls that others in the Russian government began to caution Yeltsin that Clinton deceived him

[51] Ibid
[52] Ibid
[53] Ibid., 10
[54] Warren Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime: A Memoir* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 28.
[55] Strobe Talbot, *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* (New York: Random House, 2002), 101.

and the "PFP was a trick to draw East Europeans into NATO, leaving Russia in the cold."[56] Despite these cautions, Kozyrev himself supports Christopher and Talbot's assertion that Yeltsin preferred to hear what he felt like hearing.[57]

Throughout 1994, the U.S. and NATO continued to provide assurances to Russia that NATO enlargement was not meant to be exclusionary nor anti-Russian. In fact, a June 1994 NATO communique stated that "our relationship with Russia, including in appropriate areas outside the Partnership for Peace, will be developed over time,"[58] reaffirming for Russia that NATO sought additional cooperative arrangements even beyond PFP. As Martin Smith notes, NATO members up to this point had rejected any side deals above and beyond PFP, so the language in the communique marked a key concession to Russia to persuade them to join NATO.[59] Moreover, during President Yeltsin's visit to Washington, D.C. later that same year, according to Strobe Talbot, Clinton told Yeltsin that while NATO would expand, there was no imminent timetable and that the U.S. was "emphasizing *inclusion*, not exclusion." In Talbot's retelling, Clinton goes out of his way to assuage Yeltsin's fears about NATO expansion and PFP, and even promises him that "U.S. policy would be guided by the motto, "the three no's": no surprises, no rush and no exclusion" to which Yeltsin said he "understood."[60]

Not long after though, Yeltsin learned of the administration's NATO enlargement interagency planning process which included a Pentagon study about the mechanics of enlarging NATO.[61]

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[56] Kozyrev, "Russia and NATO Enlargement," 455.
[57] Ibid.
[58] North Atlantic Cooperation Council, "Final Communique: Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council," 9-10 June 1994. Instanbul, Turkey. https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c940609b.htm
[59] Smith, "A Bumpy Road to an Unknown Destination?," 62.
[60] Strobe Talbott, "Bill, Boris and NATO" in *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War,* ed. Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr, (Washington, D.C.: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2019), 414.
[61] Daniel S. Hamilton, "Piece of the Puzzle: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Architecture After the Cold War" in *Open Door: NATO and Euro-Atlantic Security After the Cold War,* ed. Daniel S. Hamilton and Kristina Spohr, (Washington, D.C.: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 2019), 21.

Yeltsin writes President Clinton on November 29, 1994, expressing his incomprehension at the reasons behind speeding up the discussion on the "broadening of NATO."[62] Yeltsin warns that an "expedited timetable" will be interpreted as "the beginning of a new split in Europe" and closes his letter by confirming Russia's continued interest in "profound cooperation with NATO."[63] Shortly thereafter, Kozyrev pulled out of talks to finalize Russia's PFP membership because Russia objected to a NATO statement announcing the initiation of a process to examine how NATO would enlarge.[64] Without having been given prior warning, Russia viewed the announcement as a "surprise" and accused Clinton of violating his "no surprises" pledge. This event perpetuated the belief inside Russia that NATO and the U.S. were trying to "covertly initiate an enlargement process"[65] and prompted Yeltsin to accuse Clinton of "sowing the seeds of mistrust" and ushering in an era of "cold peace" in Europe.[66] The resulting mistrust delayed Russia's entrance to PFP until May 1995.

[62] Boris Yeltsin to Bill Clinton, "Boris-Bill Letter," 29 November 1994, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C., 3. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390827-Document-13-Official-informal-No-248-Boris-Bill
[63] Ibid.
[64] North Atlantic Cooperation Council, "Final Communique: Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council," 15 December 1994. NATO Headquarters, Brussels. https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c941215a.htm
[65] Smith, "A Bumpy Road to an Unknown Destination?," 63.
[66] Boris Yeltsin quoted in Hamilton, "Piece of the Puzzle," 22.

The Balkans

Bosnia

To appropriately assess how NATO's expansion affected U.S.-Russia relations we have to understand the larger regional context in which the debates were happening and how external security crisis – specifically the Bosnia and Kosovo wars – were intertwined with and informed Russia's opposition to NATO enlargement.

Before President Clinton took office in 1993, and well before NATO enlargement gained momentum, the UN Security Council had approved a resolution in 1992 which permitted NATO to intervene in Bosnia on humanitarian grounds, provided support for the peacekeeping mission, and enabled a no-fly zone enforced by NATO airstrikes.[67] Notably, while Russia had voted "yes" on the resolution, it was initially considered a mistake within Russia and created a split within the government, with the Duma criticizing the decision as not being sufficiently pro-Serb.[68]

Despite early Russian opposition, Kimberly Marten makes an important contribution to our understanding of how NATO involvement in Bosnia was being considered by Russia in relation to NATO expansion during the 1992-1993 timeframe. According to her interview with Kozyrev and Vitaly Churkin, Russia's UN Ambassador, NATO-led operations were "never tied to questions about NATO territorial enlargement" and if opposition was growing to NATO's intervention, "it was not (yet) because of geographical expansion plans."[69] Writing three years later in 2020 in a separate analysis, Marten makes a similar argument, pointing out that the Bosnian airstrikes and NATO enlargement were not "logically connected" at that time as the

[67] UN Security Council, Resolution 770, 13 AUG 1992, https://www.nato.int/ifor/un/u920813a.htm
[68] Marten, "Reconsidering NATO Expansion," 157.
[69] Ibid., 158.

airstrikes "occurred *before* enlargement started, and enlargement did not…increase NATO's ability to carry-out airstrikes."[70] Marten's interviews are notable because they present an important data-point that suggests the Balkans conflict and opposition to NATO enlargement are not causally connected.

As the security situation deteriorated in 1994, Russia began to register more forceful objections about the increasing frequency of NATO airstrikes which threatened to derail Russia joining the PFP. Russia's disenchantment with events in Bosnia also coincided with the larger NATO enlargement debate which was gaining traction, and it became increasingly impossible to separate consternation over NATO expansion with NATO involvement in Bosnia. Despite Russia's apprehensions though, they still elected to send a small peacekeeping force to Bosnia at the war's conclusion. Notably, this decision coincided with Russia's decision to officially join the PFP.

The evidence and arguments suggest that Russian objections to NATO enlargement were not causally linked to NATO involvement in Bosnia early in the conflict. Rather, the two issues would not become intertwined until later in 1994 and accelerate through the mid-1990s, culminating in vociferous opposition over NATO's involvement in Kosovo in 1999.

Kosovo

Regardless of Russia's willingness to participate in Bosnia peace process, they harbored resentments about the war's conduct and their anger festered. They resented the manner in which they were being treated by the West, feeling their security interests and historical linkages with Serbia were not being properly considered, and they resented their diminished power to stand up to the U.S., to NATO, and their inability to slow NATO's inexorable growth east. With attention

[70] Marten, NATO Enlargement," 412.

focused inwardly on domestic political turmoil in Russia and outwardly on achieving a peace settlement in Bosnia and Croatia, the uprising of ethnic Albanians against Serbian rule in Kosovo was largely ignored. However, as the situation deteriorated, Belgrade's brutal response refocused NATO and Russia's attention on the unfolding crisis in Kosovo.

Efforts to resolve the Kosovo crisis centered around the international community's push to persuade Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to grant autonomy to Kosovo and agree to an international peacekeeping force. The historical record reveals that Moscow and the U.S. shared a common view of the need to work together to solve the crisis. In a May 1998 conversation between Clinton and Yeltsin, Clinton goes so far as to tell Yeltsin that unless the U.S. and Russia continue to work directly together, there is "no way" to prevent Serbs and Albanians from "killing each other".[71] Interestingly, in the same conversation, the two also discussed the need for a UN peacekeeping mission to remain in Macedonia, just to Bosnia's south. The record reveals that Yeltsin is in total agreement with Clinton about the need for a UN force to remain and not be replaced by NATO. Yeltsin tells Clinton that "NATO would be an elephant in the China shop" if the UN presence in Macedonia was eliminated in favor of a NATO presence.[72] The exchange is notable as it represents the first instance in which Yeltsin expresses concern about any NATO involvement in the context of the Kosovo crisis, presaging Yeltsin's growing concern about NATO's increasing involvement in the region.

The following month, Clinton and Yeltsin spoke about Kosovo at greater length. Most notable from the call-logs is Yeltsin's increasingly aggressive rhetoric regarding NATO, warning

[71] Bill Clinton to Boris Yeltsin, "Memorandum of Conversation: Conversation with President Boris Yeltsin of Russia," 17 May1998, National Security Archives, Washington, D.C., 4. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4950571-Document-12-Memorandum-of-Conversation
[72] Ibid., 4.

Clinton that "any use of force by NATO is inadmissible."[73] Yeltsin doubles-down: "Bill, I think it is inadmissible that the Security Council of the United Nations should sanction the use of force against a sovereign state…And if there should be a strike by NATO against Yugoslavia without UN Security Council sanction, that would be considered a blow to cooperation between Russia and NATO."[74] Clinton agrees about needing to work through the UN, but he does not appear to close the door entirely on NATO action, instead, simply expressing his "hope" that it won't be necessary. So, while Clinton appears to be saying the right things that may appease Yeltsin, he seems to be keeping the door open for future NATO involvement too.

The next time the two President's spoke in August, Clinton tells Yeltsin that if the Serb offensive against the Albanians does not stop, the U.S. would be "forced to respond with or without the UN."[75] The ensuing exchanges between the two men show Yeltsin taking great pains to emphasize mutual cooperation through the UN, the need for a negotiated solution and to avoid a military intervention, and Clinton patiently, but firmly pushing back against Yeltsin. It is a remarkable exchange in that it represents the first time Clinton begins to sow the seeds of NATO's eventual military involvement and Yeltsin doing everything he can rhetorically to avoid the outcome.

NATO would ultimately commence air strikes against Serbia in March 1999 despite Russian protests. Throughout the Kosovo crisis, Russian diplomats had waged a vigorous diplomatic campaign to prevent military intervention, and as the declassified conversations show, these concerns were made known and discussed repeatedly at the highest levels. Only

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[73] Boris Yeltsin to Bill Clinton, ""Memorandum of Conversation: Conversation with President Boris Yeltsin of Russia," 15 June 1998, National Security Archives, Washington, D.C., 2. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4950572-Document-13-Memorandum-of-telephone-Conversation

[74] Ibid.

[75] Bill Clinton to Boris Yeltsin, ""Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telephone Conversation with President Russian President Yeltsin," 14 August 1998, National Security Archives, Washington, D.C., 4-5. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4950573-Document-14-Memorandum-of-Telephone-Conversation

three and half hours before NATO bombs would reach Serbia, Clinton calls Yeltsin to notify him that the strikes were inbound and hoped that their disagreement over NATO's involvement in Serbia would not ruin everything else they could work on. Yeltsin was blunt: "I'm afraid we shall not succeed in that."[76] Yeltsin, failing to make a desperate appeal to their personal friendship to pull back the strikes, ends the call by noting that this will likely cause a split between Russia and the U.S. and NATO, and that he will not be able to "turn the heads of [his] people, the heads of the politicians towards the West, towards the United States."[77] In effect, Yeltsin was presaging Russia's coming rupture with NATO.

While Yeltsin harbored his own feelings about NATO involvement, Russia's domestic politics and internal governmental opposition weighed on Yeltsin just as heavily. In his diaries, Yeltsin recollects being warned by his opponents that if NATO was willing to bomb Belgrade, then they would be willing to bomb Moscow: "Today Yugoslavia, tomorrow Russia!" Yeltsin asks, "wasn't it obvious that each missile directed against Yugoslavia was an indirect strike against Russia?"[78] Moreover, opposition within the political ranks was so well known by the U.S. that they only notified Prime Minister Primakov about the impending strikes hours before, and when he heard the news, he was so enraged, he directed his plane to be turned around which was enroute to Washington. Additionally, Russian public sentiment became increasingly hostile to NATO as well because of the air strikes: when the hostilities concluded "96 percent of Russians either agreed or totally agreed that NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia is a crime against

[76] Bill Clinton to Boris Yeltsin, "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: Telephone Conversation with Russian President Yeltsin," 24 March1999, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4950575-Document-16-Memorandum-of-Telephone-Conversation
[77] Ibid., 5.
[78] Boris Yeltsin, *Midnight Diaries,* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 266.

humanity, and 77 percent either agreed or totally agreed that there is nothing stopping NATO from getting involved in Russia as it did in Yugoslavia."[79]

The historical record suggests that Russia's reaction to the Kosovo bombings could have been predicted. Considering how vociferously Russia had objected to the strikes, it came as little surprise when Russia broke off all ties with NATO and the Permanent Joint Council, potentially signaling the start of a wider, permanent break with the alliance that would forever preclude Russia from joining NATO. Despite what the evidence suggests, some scholars argue that a more nuanced look at Russia's reaction is warranted and suggests that Kosovo did not cause irreparable harm to the Russia-NATO partnership.

Martin Smith argues this point most persuasively. Smith points out that despite Russia severing ties with NATO, Russia's moves were actually carefully "calibrated and targeted," and that Russia's actions are notable for what they "did *not do.*"[80] For instance, Yeltsin ignored calls from the ruling communist party to end its military presence in Bosnia, they did not sever diplomatic ties with NATO governments, including the U.S., and most notably, when NATO bombs failed to dislodge Milosevich, despite Russia's deep opposition and anger, they diplomatically maneuvered themselves to play a pivotal role in negotiating a settlement and bringing the war to an end.[81] Moreover, despite a charged stand-off between Russian forces and NATO troops near Pristina airport which almost led to open hostilities and a broader confrontation, Russia agreed to participate in the NATO-led peacekeeping Kosovo Force (KFOR), some of whom came under operational and tactical control of the U.S.[82] When Russia's

[79] Baker, "Russia in NATO?," 96.
[80] Smith, "A Bumpy Road," 68.
[81] Ibid., 74-75.
[82] NATO Command and Control Model, "Russian Participation in KFOR," 7 July 1999, https://www.nato.int/kosovo/docu/a990618c.htm

actions are viewed in this context, the evidence could suggest that NATO's bombing of Kosovo wasn't as big of a flashpoint as some argue.

Discussion

This study attempted to determine the causes for why Russia never joined NATO during the NATO enlargement debates of the 1990s by examining primary source documents, memoirs, diaries and secondary sources. By scrutinizing the historic record, this study hoped to isolate the PFP and NATO's Kosovo campaign as the two pivot points in the relationship that ultimately form the basis of Russia's animosity towards the alliance. The evidence suggests a number of things.

First, with respect to the Partnership for Peace Program, the historical record reveals Russia expressed significant reservations early on about the PFP. From the outset, Russia's concern centered around trying to understand what the PFP's true intent was: was it a pathway to NATO expansion or was it intended to be an alternative to NATO, and would it preclude Russia from participating? The declassified memos from Warren Christopher's meetings with Foreign Minister Kozyrev and President Yeltsin reveal the depth of Russia's concerns about PFP. In fact, what is notable about these two documents is that they reveal the inconsistencies in the U.S.' position about NATO enlargement broadly, and PFP specifically, which ultimately led to Russian confusion and resentment towards PFP. In Christopher's meeting with Kozyrev, he makes clear that the administration is emphasizing the PFP leaving the impression that the program was an alternative to NATO. The confusion is further compounded in his meeting with Yeltsin, when Christopher affirms Yeltsin's understanding "that all countries in CEE and NIS would be on equal footing and there would be a partnership and not a membership." This led

Yeltsin to believe that PFP was in fact the alternative to NATO. Based on just the meeting memos, it would be easy to sympathize with Russia's sense of betrayal about how PFP proceeded and Clinton's subsequent remarks that the program was a pathway to membership. However, in reading the memoirs of the participants, to include Kozyrev's own recollections of the meetings, a fuller picture emerges and actually reveals a fundamental misunderstanding by Yeltsin about what he actually heard – or chose to hear. The evidence makes clear that the U.S. understood it had a communications problem and that their message around PFP was muddled which is why the White House dispatched various administration officials to Russia to clarify its intentions. Most prominently, Vice President Gore admitted to the confusion and conceded U.S. communications was not clear, telling the Russians that their misunderstandings was a result of the U.S.' "inability…to clearly convey to the Russian side what we are talking about."[83] However, despite repeated attempts by the administration to unwind the initial confusion, what Yeltsin heard mattered greatly for the course of Russian participation in PFP because it is directly tied to Russia backing out of joining PFP in December 1994.

However, despite the evidence demonstrating Russia's angst over PFP, the evidence also shows the program was supported by the Russian military, with its senior leaders stating Russia would be among the first to sign up, and they "hoped [PFP] would be approved and common sense would triumph."[84] Moreover, Russia did eventually join the program in 1995 which calls in to question the argument that Russian concerns over PFP was central to their not joining NATO. But, it must also be kept in mind that Russia did not renew is participation plan in PFP

[83] Vice President Gore to I.P Rybkin, "Record of the Main Content of the Conversation between I.P. Rybkin and Vice President of the United States A. Gore," 14 December 1994, National Security Archives, Washington, D.C. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390828-Document-14-Record-of-the-Main-Content-of-the

[84] Secretary of Defense Aspin to Russian MOD Grachev, "Memcon of 05 January SecDef Call to Russian MOD Grachev," 5 January 1994, National Security Archives, Washington, D.C. https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/dc.html?doc=4390824-Document-10-Memcon-of-05-January-SecDef-Call-to

when it expired just three years later in 1998 and were not active participants in the program. Consequently, the evidence points to a mixed record at best. What accounts for it? One logical explanation is that realizing enlargement was inevitable, and hoping to minimize its adverse effects on Russian interests, Russia hoped to exert some influence over the enlargement process and hoped by agreeing to participate in PFP, they could transform the program into a true alternative to NATO.[85]

Having reviewed the historical record, I do not believe that PFP in and of itself served as a decisive factor in Russia not joining NATO because the record is too mixed. Additionally, no primary or secondary sources explicitly demonstrate a causal connection in which it is stated that PFP undermined Russia's integration. While PFP is central to the NATO enlargement narrative, it has to be thought of as a vehicle to the larger objective of admitting new states to the alliance. Consequently, any Russian objection to PFP is rooted more in their broader concerns about NATO expansion itself and not necessarily the particulars of PFP.

Second, with respect to Kosovo, the evidence is equally mixed in some respects. The evidence clearly shows that Yeltsin and his government repeatedly warned Clinton and his administration in successive conversations over the course of a year about military involvement in Kosovo and that NATO engagement would cause irreparable damage to the alliance and to the U.S.-Russian relationship. Quite in fact, once the bombing began, the predicted rupture occurred with Russia pulling out of the PFP program and severing contact with NATO. However, the evidence also shows that these actions were likely more calculated instead of blowing up the relationship outright. Indeed, we have to consider the fact that despite Russia's prior warnings, they deftly maneuvered diplomatically to help bring the crisis to an end, secured important

[85] Oksana Antonenko, "Russia, NATO and European Security After Kosovo," *Survival* 41, no. 4 (1999), 128.

concessions for its Serb allies, and were important contributors to the Kosovo peacekeeping force through 2003.

Despite Russia's eventual participation, the Kosovo bombings resulted in a number of profound strategic shifts in Russian foreign policy. For example, Russia began to view the second Chechen war through the prism of Kosovo and consciously adopted similar tactics and believed that Chechens, like the Kosovar Albanians, had extra-territorial ambitions.[86] This new prism also informed Russia's views of other post-Soviet territorial conflicts in places like Georgia and Azerbaijan, and prompted a strengthening of military ties with other CIS countries. Moreover, whereas Russia's 1997 strategic review was focused on internal threats, Russia revised its military doctrine post-Kosovo to emphasize "the threat of direct military aggression against Russia and its allies" and slowed its pace of armed forced reductions.[87] While NATO is not explicitly mentioned, it is clear the strategic revisions are geared towards confronting NATO. Perhaps most profound though, Kosovo effectively killed ratification of the START II treaty at the time and prompted Russia to relook its nuclear deterrent.[88]

The evidence presented clearly shows that NATO's involvement in Kosovo created a rupture between the alliance and Russia, led to significant shifts in Russian foreign policy, and resulted in perhaps the lowest point in U.S.-Russia relations since the end of the Cold War. Additionally, while the evidence shows concrete actions Russia took in the wake of the war, Kosovo also exacerbated Russia's larger concerns about NATO enlargement broadly. NATO air strikes conducted outside of NATO's boundaries, combined with bypassing the UNSC – the one place Russia retained some form of its original power in the form of a veto – played on Russia's

[86] Antonenko, "Russia, NATO and European Security After Kosovo," 132.
[87] Ibid., 134-135.
[88] Ibid., 135.

unresolved issue about status, the psychological scars from the break-up of the Soviet Union and the resulting diminishment of their role as a great power. Consequently, NATO actions in the Balkans fueled the re-emergence of a latent Russian strategic culture, rooted in Russia's "geographic and spiritual legacy" in which Russia historically sought security "through territorial expansion" and believed they were surrounded by enemies.[89] Russia's renewal of this historical strategic culture, which laid dormant immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union as Russia sought greater cooperation and integration with the West, has resulted in the re-emergence of a post-Kosovo Russian foreign policy under President Putin that is based on "combativeness and competitiveness, perceptions of foreign threat (especially from the United States and the West), and political assertiveness bordering on pugnacity."[90]

Conclusion

Despite the early promise for improved relations after the Soviet Union's collapse, Washington and Moscow have struggled to move forward with a productive relationship, with multiple attempts by successive U.S. administrations to "reset" the relationship all to no avail. A constructive relationship has failed to materialize for numerous reasons, but one of the most prominent legacy issues for today's adversarial relationship is the issue of NATO expansion, which continues to be cited by Russian officials, to include President Putin, as a source of today's tensions.[91] Given the centrality NATO occupies in Russian strategic thought in modern

[89] Donald Jensen. "Towards a Cold War 2.0? Russia-NATO Relations in Crisis," in *NATO: 1949-1999-2019: The 20 Years of Poland in the 70 Years of the Alliance*, edited by Ann Kurowska, 17-24. Warsaw, Poland: Institute for Eastern Studies, 2019. https://www.aies.at/download/2019/NATO-1949-1999-2019.pdf?m=1568440561&;
[90] Jensen, "Towards a Cold War 2.0? Russia-NATO Relations in Crisis," 19-20; see also Fritz W. Ermarth. "Russia's Strategic Culture: Past, Present, and...in Transition?" Defense Threat Reduction Agency Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, October 31, 2006. 14. https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/russia.pdf
[91] Vladimir Putin, "Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy." Speech, Munich, Germany, February 10, 2007; Thom Shanker and Mark Landler, "Putin Says U.S. Is Undermining Global Stability," *New York Times*, February 11, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/11/world/europe/11munich.html; Richard Oliphant, "Vladimir Putin Blames NATO Expansion for Rising Tension in Europe," *Telegraph*, January 11, 2016, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/12093042/Vladimir-Putin-blames-Nato-

times, this research project started out trying to determine what precluded Russia from joining NATO during the 1990s. Ultimately, the evidence presented has led to a split conclusion, with the Kosovo war triggering a fundamental shift in Russia's relationship to NATO in concrete ways, but no evidence to suggest an equal split occurred because of their opposition to the PFP. Despite the mixed results, what is clear from the evidence is that instead of viewing the PFP and the Kosovo war as distinct pivot points in the relationship, it would be wiser to viewed them in the context of other factors along a continuum of events that ultimately shed light on Russia's failure to join NATO and its continuing animosity toward the alliance. Additionally, the preceding analysis raises a number of interesting implications and points to new directions for further research as future work will be required because the benefits and drawbacks of the alliance remain hotly contested, its future uncertain, and further enlargement continues to be a possibility.

First, while Russian leaders continue to cite NATO expansion as a source of tension, it is worth considering the degree to which expansion has caused the relationship to deteriorate in comparison to other policies, for instance, the invasion of Iraq and Libya, or support for democratic movements in former Soviet satellite-states. That is, future work could attempt to assess the legacy of NATO expansion vis-à-vis other contentious Western policies to discern whether one policy or another is more or less responsible for worsening relations. Second, future research may wish to consider whether NATO expansion has been a net positive or negative for U.S. and European security. Proponents argue that expansion enabled European peace and positively increased political and economic integration and growth. However, some would argue

expansion-for-rising-tension-with-Europe.html; Mark Landler and Helene Cooper, "U.S. Fortifying Europe's East to Deter Putin," *New York Times*, February 1, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/02/world/europe/us-fortifying-europes-east-to-deter-putin.html.

it has allowed U.S. allies to "freeload" on the American security guarantee and that enlargement has been more beneficial to new members but has done nothing to increase U.S. security.[92] Moreover, it was argued that expanding NATO would lead to increased democratization in Eastern Europe. As several NATO members have experienced significant backsliding in democratic norms, especially in Hungary and Poland, it begs the question of whether expansion has lived up to its political promises. Further research is required to assess both the political and security dynamics, and whether NATO expansion has lived up to its original promises. Despite the amount and diversity of evidence presented in this paper, it is nevertheless limited and cannot be considered a full recounting of what actually occurred due to numerous limitations as previously discussed, which points to a final avenue for future research: as new sources become available, more archives are opened, materials are declassified, and interviews conducted, scholars and historians will continually need to probe this evidence and match it against the existing historical record. Such efforts will not only enable us to more fully understand NATO expansion in a fuller historical context, but will also allow policy makers to better assess the outcomes of NATO expansion, and "link" them with "insights about the factors and conditions that contribute to peace, economic growth, political influence, and other broadly positive results."[93]

[92] Stephen M. Walt, "NATO Isn't What You Think It Is," *Foreign Policy*, July 26, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/07/26/nato-isnt-what-you-think-it-is/; Barry R. Posen, "Trump Aside, What's the U.S. Role in NATO?," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/10/opinion/trump-aside-whats-the-us-role-in-nato.html

[93] Goldgeier and Itzkowitz, "Evaluating NATO Enlargement," 314.

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